

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BELFAS 00048 221949Z

70

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04

RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-03 NIC-01 COME-00 DRC-01

/062 W

----- 015017

R 221857Z APR 74

FM AMCONSUL BELFAST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 644

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

USNAVCOMMSTA LONDONDERRY

UNCLAS BELFAST 048

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, U.K. (N.I.)

SUBJECT: NI OPTS FOR MODERATION IN BBC POLL

SUMMARY: NEARLY 1000 NI VOTERS WHO WOULD TALK TO POLLSTERS COMMISSIONED BY BBC/NI OPPOSED POLITICAL VIOLENCE, BACKED ASSEMBLY AND EXECUTIVE, AS WELL AS CONCEPT OF POWER-SHARING, AND SUPPORTED CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS IN IRISH REPUBLIC. BUT AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED, TWO POLITICAL TRADITIONS CLASHED OVER ULTIMATE POLITICAL ASPIRATIONS AND ON CONCEPT OF COUNCIL OF IRELAND. POLL RESULTS WERE DISMISSED BY LOYALISTS BUT WERE WELCOMED BY MODERATES. LATTER SAW POLL AS CONFIRMING WHAT THEY HAVE BEEN SAYING ABOUT NI PUBLIC OPINION. END SUMMARY

1. POLL OF 979 VOTERS, 68 PER CENT PROTESTANT AND 31 PER CENT ROMAN CATHOLICS, TAKEN MARCH 30-APRIL 7, AND REPORTED BY BBC NORTHERN IRELAND APRIL 18, SHOWED BROAD BI-SECTARIAN CONSENSUS:

A - DISAPPROVING POLITICAL VIOLENCE:

B - APPROVING ASSEMBLY AND POWER-SHARING EXECUTIVE AND URGING LOYALISTS TO STOP BOYCOTTING THESE INSTITUTIONS:

C - REJECTING INDEPENDENT NI OUTSIDE UK AND WITHOUT UK FINANCIAL SUPPORT: AND

D - BACKING CHANGES IN IRISH REPUBLIC CONSTITUTION AND LAW
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PAGE 02 BELFAS 00048 221949Z

TO PERMIT DIVORCE, CONTRACEPTION, AND FORMAL RECOGNITION OF

EXISTENCE OF STATE OF NI.

2. SLIGHT PROTESTANT MAJORITY AND CATHOLIC PLURALITY FOUND DIRECT RULE FROM WESTMINSTER PERSONALLY ACCEPTABLE. QUESTIONS ON OTHER POSSIBLE FUTURE CONSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR NI ELICITED TRADITIONAL SPLIT BETWEEN NI'S TWO POLITICAL TRADITIONS. CATHOLIC PLURALITY FOUND ACCEPTABLE A UNIFIED IRELAND OUTSIDE UK (46 PER CENT FOR AND 37 PER CENT AGAINST) OR (DESMOND BOAL'S) CONCEPT OF "AMALGAMATED IRELAND" (A"-29) IDEAS OVERWHELMINGLY REJECTED BY PROTESTANTS. ON OTHER HAND, PROTESTANTS WELCOME FOR RETURN TO NI PARLIAMENT WITH ONE-PARTY RULE (58-38) RAN AGAINST CATHOLIC GRAIN (7-87). PROTESTANT MAJORITY FAVORED TOTAL INTEGRATION WITHIN UK, WHILE CATHOLICS PLURALITY MARGINALLY REJECTED IT. ONLY ALTERNATIVE "MOST PREFERRED" BY SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS OF BOTH COMMUNITIES WAS POWER-SHARING (18 PER CENT PROTESTANTS AND 55 PER CENT CATHOLICS).

3. COUNCIL OF IRELAND A LA SUNNINGDALE WAS REJECTED 52-26 BY PROTESTANTS BUT ENDORSED 72-4 BY CATHOLICS, A RESULT ROUGHLY IN LINE WITH THAT OF FEBRUARY 28 GENERAL ELECTION IF ONE INTERPRETS IT AS REFERENDUM ON COUNCIL OF IRELAND. BUT IF THERE IS COUNCIL OF IRELAND, PROTESTANT MAJORITY AGREES WITH CATHOLIC MAJORITY THAT IT SHOULD BE GIVEN RESPONSIBILITY NOT ONLY FOR NON-CONTROVERSIAL MATTERS LIKE TOURISM AND ELECTRICITY BUT ALSO FOR SUPPRESSION OF TERRORISM THROUGHOUT IRELAND.

4. WHICH WAS RATHER TO RESPONDENT'S THOUGHTS ON PROBABLE POLITICAL SOLUTION IN 20 YEARS, 68 PER CENT OF PROTESTANTS AND 37 PER CENT OF CATHOLICS EXPECTED NI WOULD STILL BE PART OF UK, WHILE 37 PER CENT OF CATHOLICS AND 10 PER CENT OF PROTESTANTS THOUGHT IT WOULD BE PART OF UNITED IRELAND OUTSIDE UK.

5. MOST MODERATES WELCOMED POLL RESULTS: LOYALISTS DISMISSED THEM AS MISLEADING AND IRRELEVANT IN LIGHT OF FEBRUARY 28 ELECTIONS RESULTS. REPUBLICANS ALSO DENIGRATED POLL AND POLLSTERS SAYING THERE SHOULD HAVE BEEN QUESTIONS ON INTERNMENT. INDEED, POLL RESULTS TEND TO CONFIRM WHAT PRO-ASSEMBLY UNIONISTS AND ALLIANCE HAVE BEEN SAYING -- PEOPLE UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 BELFAS 00048 221949Z

OPPOSE VIOLENCE AND ABSTENTIONISM AND BACK POWER-SHARING, BUT ARE DEEPLY DIVIDED BOTH ON LONG-RANGE ASPIRATIONS AND COUNCIL-OF-IRELAND PROPOSALS.
PENBERTHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PUBLIC ATTITUDES, RADIO COMMENTS, POLITICAL SITUATION, CIVIL DISORDERS, CENTRAL GOVERNMENT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 APR 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974BELFAS00048
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740094-0291
From: BELFAST
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740426/aaaaawnq.tel
Line Count: 111
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: shawdg
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 SEP 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <05 SEP 2002 by BryanSD>; APPROVED <27 DEC 2002 by shawdg>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NI OPTS FOR MODERATION IN BBC POLL SUMMARY: NEARLY 1000 NI VOTERS WHO WOULD TALK TO POLLSTERS
TAGS: PINT, UK
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005